THE BOOKSHELF

BLUE RHINE, BLACK FOREST

By LOUIS UNTERMEYER

Blue Rhine, Black Forest, a book of travel, is the only book of this type that has been written by the author, Louis Untermeyer, who specializes in poetry, essays, and critical collections. This book, as is obviously shown by the title, consists of a description of the Rhine Valley from Cologne to Old Heidelberg, embracing cities, villages, castles, mountains, and all the traditional figures and landscapes that make that district so famous. The latter half of the book is given over to the Black Forest, another well-known German play ground.

London is suggested as the logical starting point for the trip, thence to Cologne via Brussels. Cologne with its mighty Cathedral and mysterious legends holds your interest for a while, and then you move down the Rhine towards Bonn. The Rhine, a river which always seemed to bring to my mind a kaleidoscope of priceless scenes and figures is here pictured as nothing but a narrow muddy stream, clogged with a confusion of shipping. The river gradually widens and you now pass the famous wine districts. The pages seem to fairly drip with the rare wines, and you can taste everything from Hochheimer to Bodendorfer. You slip into Bonn and visit Beethoven's birthplace, a miserable garret. The journey from Bonn to Coblenz is filled with countless legends, which are told very well and make the book more interesting. The many castles which you only knew existed, and the seven mountains, take on a new meaning. You anticipate Coblenz, the home of the American Army of Occupation. Out of Coblenz you see more wine mountains, and the famed Mouse Tower of Bingen. Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Heidelberg hold new and never tiring treasures for you. You finish the journey in the Black Forest. You will read with wonder the descriptions of the shady glens and towering crags, and you will marvel at the simple peasant customs that still exist in this fairylike hinterland.

Upon finishing this book one cannot help but note the author's cultural tendencies in his frequent descriptions of German art, literature, and music.

A book of this type is well worth any one's time to read. It does not depend on an exciting plot to hold your interest, but rather the wonders and beauties of the world-famous Rhine district. It will give you a deeper satisfaction that will be remembered long after a novel is forgotten, and when you have finished you will know in what part of Germany Heidelberg is, and what "Katzenjammer" really means. The interest of the book is also greatly enhanced by numerous maps and photographs.

—J. S.

Buy your thermometer now; indications are that they will be higher next summer.

ENGINEERING

By ALEXANDER GEST

To students of engineering in general and of civil engineering in particular this book should be dedicated. It is both instructive and entertaining and would help to fill a large gap in the early education of engineers, that is, a knowledge of engineering methods and accomplishments among the ancients. Although most of us are aware of the fact that there was engineering ability among the Greeks and Romans, and though we have heard of the Appian Way and the mighty aqueducts of Rome, we probably do not know how they were designed, constructed, what materials were brought into use, and to what limitations they were held. We do not realize either, that these ancient works are of any importance to modern engineering. It is the purpose of this book to show that such a relation does exist even though modern engineering has far surpassed the old.

The book begins with Roman methods of construction, and numerous quotations in Latin make you conscious of all the Latin you have forgotten. It explains that practically all construction was done with hewn lava, which was plentiful in and around Rome. Mortar, stucco, and lead piping were known to the earliest Romans, and cement was discovered later. A large part of the book is given over to a description of the Roman aqueducts. There were a large number of these magnificent structures that brought fresh water into the Eternal City from distances as great as 50 miles. They most generally terminated in great public fountains throughout Rome, but it was not uncommon for private citizens to have running water. No expense was spared in laying the aqueducts, even though it required tunneling through mountains or building great bridges.

The Roman roads are next described, and some idea of their magnitude can be pictured from the fact that there were 372 highways totaling more than 50,000 English miles. Although there is some dispute, it is generally conceded that the Roman engineers were the first to build paved highways. In construction they would first go down to solid earth or rock and then in order, place a layer of sand, mortar, rock, cement, and lava. A road thus built was usually about five feet deep. Quality was never sacrificed, even though materials had to be hauled great distances. Roman roads are still used, especially over the Alps, where snow slides frequently destroy the inferior modern roads. It is interesting to note that the four main roads in England were originally Roman highways. In building tunnels and bridges the Roman engineers invented instruments which, with modifications, are still used today. An example is the forerunner of the modern theodolite. The Romans had a weakness that undoubtedly survives today. They failed to give proper credit to their engineers. History says that Agrippa built the Pantheon, but the names of the architect and engineers are not known.

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This volume tries to avoid technical descriptions, and does not attempt to completely cover the ancient works, but does give you an idea of their extent and character. And when you finish the book you can not help but have a feeling of respect for those engineers of a bygone civilization.

—J. S.